

## **MINUTES**

### **PRINCIPAL STAFF MEETING**

**Monday, December 19, 2005**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Bill O'Donnell</b>	<b>Herb Andrick</b>
	<b>Louis Aspey</b>	<b>Pat Bowen</b>
	<b>Carol Lagodich</b>	<b>Greg Stone</b>
	<b>Steve Carpenter</b>	<b>Greg Kist</b>
	<b>Andy Deichert</b>	<b>Carolyn Hefner</b>
	<b>Susan Edgar</b>	<b>Dennis Burns</b>
	<b>Barb McWhorter</b>	

The meeting was called to order by Bill O'Donnell (who acted as facilitator) at 8:00 am.

#### **BILL O'DONNELL**

Ron Hilliard sends his greetings to everyone. Ron and his son were successful in getting two hogs/boars the other day. Bill asked if there were any additions to the Agenda Items. One item concerning training courses was added to the agenda.

Last week a bulletin went out (i.e. WV360-6-3) on the Performance Management System that was just announced. This bulletin has a due date of January 13<sup>th</sup>. We tried to figure out if we could get a little more time for the due date, but found out that was a national deadline so we couldn't put it back any further. It is the new 5-tier system. You need to do it in hard copy—anything online won't work.

Supervisors need to get their employees signatures on those. If the employee doesn't sign it, the supervisor notes that. We need to get those written, signed, and the DCs to inform their ASTC-FO that they have that in place for their employees. The ASTC-FOs and the Principal Staff will report to Larry all their employees have a new performance plan.

Next, there was a discussion of the Master Calendar. Is it necessary? A couple of attendees said they used it. Some said it is good for looking up training and keeping track of the quarterly meetings and, perhaps, just to provide an awareness of other things that are going on that may be affecting people's schedules. It was suggested that this information might be put on the National Schedule and accessed by logging on to My.NRCS and sorting by West Virginia.

So, please get scheduled meetings, tours and trainings to Diana

### **HERB ANDRICK**

Most of the report on the CSP Public Meetings I will leave to Greg as he was the one who was keeping track of who showed up at each of the meetings. All the meetings are done now. They finished up Friday night at Walkersville Fire Department. The turnout varied anywhere from 2-43 at these meetings, so we had mixed results. We are already scheduling some in January for future watersheds. DCs need to start getting their farmers ready and getting them thinking about the program.

### **GREG KIST**

The meetings went very well. According to my numbers we had over 150 land owners participate in at least 11 of the meetings that I attended. I did not go to the Braxton County meeting. I thought we had good attendance and very, very high interest. We had a few that signed their card “No” and went out the door. But, for the most part, they were all very interested in signing up or at least coming in and seeing how eligible they were and what kind of dollars we were talking about. I would like to give some “kudos” to Herb. He did an outstanding job with those meetings. He is very dedicated—11 of those 12 meetings were at night—so those were very long nights for him driving all the way back to Bridgeport. It was very informative for the land owners, if they didn’t get the information that they needed at that meeting, then they just weren’t paying attention. Herb did a great job with those meetings and I appreciate it.

### **HERB ANDRICK**

I want to congratulate Greg also for coming out and sticking with us on those meetings because I think he is the only field assistant that has ever shown up for one in two years.

### **BILL O’DONNELL**

Hopefully, when the sign-up is announced with all these meetings and other people going from these meetings and talking to their neighbors, we’ll have a good sign-up. Congratulations Herb and Greg and thank you very much for that work.

### **GREG KIST**

As I said before, we have two soil conservationists; one is mine and one is Greg Stone’s. Those are the two employees right now that are searching for a course that they can take that would ensure their qualifications for the SC position. They can’t get an answer on whether or not the courses they are looking at would qualify them. If we can’t tell our employees that a course qualifies them to work for us, how can we tell them that a course does not qualify them? How are we disqualifying certain courses and then other courses we cannot even tell them if it works or not? We need to get our employees some good information so that they can make sure that they

are qualified. They are willing to go the extra step—they've actually registered already for an online course from Oregon State University and are ready to take it. They are being told verbally that yeah, I think it will work, but I'm not 100 percent sure. Well, when can we tell them we are 100 percent sure that it will work—before they spend their money and time taking the course? They have sent their course descriptions to Larry Sargent.

**BILL O'DONNELL**

We will work on it at this end. If Larry is not sure, he can elevate the question to the national level and get an answer from them. I will get with Larry and see if they can't get a better answer.

**CAROLYN HEFNER**

Just a reminder that the quarterly meeting will be held on January 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. On the 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am we would like someone to attend the Legislative meeting because we are getting ready to put our things together to go to Washington. On the 10<sup>th</sup> is the State Committee Meeting. Also mark on your calendars that the legislature starts on January 11<sup>th</sup>. The Conservation/Agriculture Day at the Legislature will be February 14<sup>th</sup>. We'll be doing displays and so forth so you'll hear the logistics on how that's running local events. We will be running the logistical part of that from the shop.

**GREG KIST**

We are hot and heavy on workgroup meetings. We have two or three scheduled for this week trying to meet the deadline of January 9<sup>th</sup> to have all of those completed and the information returned to Morgantown. Herb and I were discussing CSP the other night. We are hoping for a sign-up of probably 100 land owners. That's an optimistic number, but I think it is very achievable for our folks. The DCs in my area have been pushing it very hard and trying to do whatever they can to get as many folks at least aware of the program and get them in for interviews so that they can determine their eligibility.

**GREG STONE**

We are trying to get a WRP sign-up—in fact, we think we have one in-hand. This is something that Ron Hilliard had suggested that he very much wanted to have done. We are taking him at his word that this is not going to be like the old WRP that takes forever and maybe doesn't even get done after all. So we are selling that really hard. Hopefully, we will be able to collect a few bucks out of WRP. We are also doing the workgroup stuff. Are we going to be using the online national ranking criteria this year?

**HERB ANDRICK**

No, there is about probably two months' worth of work trying to get that thing up and running—we would like you to stay with the paper version this year.

**GREG STONE**

I did not see anything in the instructions that asks the local workgroups to submit anything on that. Did I miss something, or are we going with last years'? How is that going to work out?

**HERB ANDRICK**

If they want to make changes to last years', and I anticipate they will because of that question on horses—a lot of them have expressed concern about the horse people coming in and taking all of the money—they could put points in their ranking if they have normal/other livestock.

**GREG STONE**

I don't know of any ranking criteria.

**HERB ANDRICK**

Once they get it submitted (and as soon as we get it online) then they can start ranking.

**GREG STONE**

I don't think my folks know about that, so I'll let them know. Also, am I right in thinking that the WHIP funding has been increased?

**HERB ANDRICK**

Yes, it has been increased considerably.

**GREG STONE**

Is there was any room for some special approaches to WHIP this year? We will probably have more money than we have sign-ups.

**HERB ANDRICK**

What kind of special approaches? We will discuss this between ourselves in more depth later. I would point out to you, however, that the cap that used to be on WHIP contracts is not there anymore.

**PAT BOWEN**

The state farmland protection authority has a meeting scheduled for January 5<sup>th</sup> in Lewisburg and one of the items that I need to do this morning is to confirm that we can use the conference room there at the new service center. I assume that it will accommodate 25 or 30 people, will it not?

**GREG STONE**

It will but it is going to be crowded in there with that many folks.

**PAT BOWEN**

The reason I want to have some expansion ability is that we are having a guy come over from the Virginia Outdoor Foundation by the name of Bob Lee and he is an expert in the transferable tax credits for conservation easement. Not only is the State Authority coming for their formal meeting, but there will be people there who are just from the general public and the land trust community who want to hear what he has to say. So I may want to move it over to the Brier Inn or something just for the extra space.

With regard to those courses for soil conservationists and that process—my observation is that many times when the person is said not to be completely qualified it is because they have courses that are identified as ecology or environmental science or they are involved with special projects or special topics and they are not (on the face of it) identified as a plant or soil science course. When you actually get into the detail and are provided the class description, they actually are qualified. That has been one of the problems. My folks are concerned about this and want it in writing from somebody. There is a lot of consternation out there about it. They really want somebody to put it in writing—that what they do will make them fully, completely qualified.

**LOUIS ASPEY**

The Lost River monthly teleconference is at 9:00 am today.

**HERB ANDRICK**

Last week we got a letter from the Chief announcing a conservation contract incentive in EQIP for those people starting with the 2006 contracts who complete all of the structural measures and “structural” is defined as anything that is not management in the first two years. Then, of course, to be eligible for that, all of the items in the contract have to either be paid at an average cost or flat rate. Something to be thinking about, we will get additional details out on that this

week—probably today, to the field so that they will have this information when they go into their local workgroup meetings.

**GREG STONE**

My acting will be Jerry Brackenrich. If he isn't available, the next person on the list is Loren Rice.

**BILL O'DONNELL**

The last item is to go over our travel. I spoke with Ron this morning and in our discussion we came up with allowances that we will start with. And, again, this is just a draft and what we will be starting with because we don't know what national is going to come back to us on concerning our submittal for the deficit reduction. They may tell us (and they probably will) that they didn't like what we did. We will wait to hear from them. For the Areas, Ron has decided that each will start off with \$10,000. The rest of us will take 74 percent of the requested amount of that first column. That will take us down to about \$107,000 on the requested amount. That is where we will start. Any questions? So, we will start from there and we will see what national has to say and we will respond to them and refigure things out at another time.

Have a good week. Have a good vacation for those who are on or going. And have a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

Meeting adjourned.